

Original Article

Leadership Practices and Succession Strategies Towards Sustainability: A Contextualized Framework for Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions in the Agusan Provinces

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Abstract. This study examined the leadership practices and succession strategies of family-owned higher education institutions (HEIs) in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur as bases for developing a contextualized framework for institutional sustainability. It addressed the limited local evidence on how leadership, succession, and sustainability are connected in family-owned HEIs in provincial Philippine settings. Anchored in Agency Theory, Stewardship Theory, and Stakeholder Theory, the study used an embedded mixed methods design, with quantitative data from 60 respondents across 10 family-owned HEIs and qualitative interviews with owners and successors. Data were analyzed using frequency, mean, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis at the 0.05 significance level. Findings showed that leadership practices were observed to a very high extent, with an overall mean of 4.26. The highest-rated areas were building credibility and trust ($M = 4.36$), overcoming communication barriers ($M = 4.21$), and bridging generational gaps ($M = 4.21$). Succession strategies were also implemented to a very high extent, with an overall mean of 4.22, particularly in successor mentoring. Significant differences were found in leadership practices and succession strategies when institutions were grouped according to ownership exclusivity, type, and years founded ($p < 0.05$). Leadership practices and succession strategies were significantly related to sustainability and showed positive effects on financial stability, academic excellence, adaptability and innovation, and stakeholder trust. These findings support a contextualized framework that can guide family-owned institutions in managing generational transition and long-term institutional development.

Keywords: *Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions; Leadership practices; Succession strategies; Institutional sustainability; Generational transition; Stakeholder engagement.*

Family-owned higher education institutions (HEIs) play a crucial yet often overlooked role in expanding access to tertiary education in provincial regions of the Philippines. Established through personal sacrifice and long-term family commitment, these institutions serve as anchors of local development by producing professionals, skilled workers, and community leaders. In Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur, family-owned

HEIs constitute a substantial portion of private higher education providers. However, these institutions face increasing challenges, including declining enrollment, intensified competition from public universities, stricter regulations from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and rapid technological and societal changes. These challenges make leadership continuity and institutional sustainability critical concerns.

Sustainability in higher education extends beyond financial stability to encompass academic excellence, stakeholder trust, adaptability, innovation, and long-term institutional legitimacy (Adams et al., 2015). For family-owned institutions, sustainability also involves preserving institutional legacy while responding to evolving governance demands, a balance that becomes particularly complex during leadership transitions. Leadership practices play a significant role in ensuring institutional stability and performance. Credibility, transparency, and inclusive communication have been shown to foster trust and organizational commitment (Cunha et al., 2021; Toseef et al., 2022). Participatory leadership further enhances organizational resilience during periods of change (Lima, 2025), while intergenerational dynamics influence how founders' values align with successors' modernization efforts (Del Barone et al., 2025).

Succession planning remains underdeveloped in many family-run organizations. Studies indicate that only a small proportion of family businesses successfully transition beyond the second generation, often due to reliance on informal succession processes (Agwa, 2023; Baltazar et al., 2023). Such practices increase the risk of leadership instability and organizational disruption. In contrast, structured mentoring and early involvement of successors significantly improve transition outcomes (Hill et al., 2022), while formalized succession policies enhance governance transparency and stakeholder confidence (Jackson, 2025). In many Asian contexts, cultural norms and family hierarchies further contribute to delays in formal succession planning (Lee & Ding, 2023).

Despite extensive literature on leadership, succession, and sustainability, most existing studies focus on corporate family firms or large urban universities. There remains limited empirical research on provincial family-owned HEIs in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao. Moreover, prior studies tend to examine leadership, succession, and sustainability as separate constructs rather than as interconnected factors influencing institutional outcomes (Hariyani et al., 2025). There is also limited integration of theoretical perspectives such as Agency Theory, Stewardship Theory, and Stakeholder Theory in explaining how family governance structures shape institutional sustainability.

This gap is significant because provincial family-owned HEIs operate within distinct socio-cultural and economic contexts that influence leadership dynamics and succession practices differently from corporate settings. Without a comprehensive understanding of how leadership practices and succession strategies interact to influence sustainability, these institutions remain vulnerable to governance challenges and ineffective leadership transitions.

This study aimed to examine the leadership practices and succession strategies of family-owned HEIs in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur and determine their relationship with institutional sustainability. Anchored in Agency Theory, Stewardship Theory, and Stakeholder Theory, the study sought to develop a contextualized framework that integrates professional governance mechanisms with family stewardship values. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for HEI owners, successors, employees, policymakers, and scholars, contributing to more effective leadership transitions and long-term sustainability in provincial family-owned higher education institutions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed an embedded mixed-methods research design, in which the quantitative component served as the primary method and the qualitative component was embedded to provide supporting insights. The quantitative phase examined the extent, differences, relationships, and predictive effects of leadership practices and succession strategies on the sustainability of family-owned higher education institutions (HEIs). The qualitative phase, conducted after the quantitative data collection, involved in-depth interviews with selected owners and successors to explain and contextualize the statistical results. Integration occurred at the interpretation stage, where qualitative themes were used to support, explain, and elaborate on quantitative findings. This design was appropriate as it allowed for both statistical generalization and a deeper understanding of leadership transitions within family-owned HEIs.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted among family-owned HEIs in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur. Out of sixteen (16) identified institutions, ten (10) agreed to participate. A total of sixty (60) respondents, consisting of owners, presidents, board members, department heads, and key administrators, were included in the quantitative phase. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that only individuals directly involved in leadership and succession processes were selected. Inclusion criteria required respondents to (1) have at least five years of service in the institution, (2) possess direct knowledge of leadership transitions, and (3) hold permanent or tenured positions. Faculty members and students who were not involved in governance or succession were excluded. For the qualitative component, ten (10) participants were purposively selected from the survey respondents, consisting of institutional owners, current leaders, and identified successors. These participants were selected for their direct experience with leadership transition processes.

Table 1. *Distribution of Respondents*

Family-Owned HEI	Frequency	Percentage
FOHEI 1	6	10.00
FOHEI 2	14	23.33
FOHEI 3	8	13.33
FOHEI 4	4	6.67
FOHEI 5	8	13.33
FOHEI 6	4	6.67
FOHEI 7	8	13.33
FOHEI 8	4	6.67
FOHEI 9	2	3.33
FOHEI 10	2	3.33
Total	60	100

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire grounded in Agency Theory, Stewardship Theory, and Stakeholder Theory, and informed by relevant literature (e.g., Umans et al., 2020; Arrieta et al., 2022). The instrument consisted of four sections: (1) institutional profile (5 items), (2) leadership practices (15 items), (3) succession strategies (15 items), and (4) sustainability dimensions (15 items), for a total of 50 items measured using a five-point Likert scale. Content validity was established through evaluation by five (5) experts in educational management and research, who assessed the relevance, clarity, and alignment of each item with the study variables. The instrument underwent pilot testing with thirty (30) respondents from non-participating HEIs. Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.91 for leadership practices, 0.89 for succession strategies, and 0.93 for sustainability, indicating high internal consistency. A semi-structured interview guide was also developed for the qualitative phase, focusing on leadership transition experiences, succession planning practices, and sustainability strategies.

Data Gathering Procedure

A formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study was sent to each participating institution. Upon approval, questionnaires were distributed to eligible respondents in person. The data collection process was scheduled according to institutional availability. Qualitative data were gathered through face-to-face interviews using an interview guide to ensure consistency. Interviews focused on leadership transition experiences, succession planning processes, and institutional sustainability practices. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected sequentially, with interview findings used to enrich and explain survey results.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were encoded and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe institutional profiles. Mean distribution determined the extent of leadership practices, succession strategies, and sustainability. T-tests and ANOVA were used to assess significant differences across groups defined by institutional profile. Pearson-r correlation assessed relationships among variables, while regression analysis determined the predictive effects of leadership practices and succession strategies on sustainability. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were organized into recurring themes to support and explain quantitative findings. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced validity and interpretative depth.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Formal approval was obtained from participating institutions before data collection. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily. Anonymity was ensured by excluding personal identifiers from the dataset and final report. All information gathered was treated with strict confidentiality and stored securely. Data were used solely for academic purposes. These measures ensured participant protection, transparency, and research integrity.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions

Table 2 presents the data regarding the profile of family-owned higher education institutions.

Table 2. Profile of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions		
Institutional Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Ownership Exclusivity		
Closed	10	100.00
Open	0	0.00
Type		
College	8	80.00
Institute	2	20.00
University		
Years Founded		
Less than 25 years	2	20.00
25-50 years	3	30.00
More than 50 years	5	50.00

The colleges (80%). Half of the institutions have existed for more than 50 years, indicating institutional maturity and long-term family leadership. Interview excerpts highlight the service-oriented nature of these institutions:

"It was not about profit but service... to educate the youth..." (FOHEI 5)

"Our guiding value is serbisiyong totoo..." (FOHEI 2)

These findings reflect the stewardship orientation of family institutions, consistent with Choi, Altbach, de Wit, and Allen (2021). Most FOHEIs also originated as small vocational schools and gradually expanded into colleges, supporting Jones (2024).

"The school started... we rented a small space."
(FOHEI 6)

This evolution suggests that FOHEIs transitioned from modest beginnings into stable institutions. However, sustaining this legacy requires more structured leadership and succession systems, as noted by Zhang et al. (2025).

Leadership Practices

Building Credibility and Trust

Table 3. Mean Distribution on the Extent of Leadership Practices in Terms of Building Credibility and Trust		
Building Credibility and Trust	Mean	Verbal Description
The institution's leadership consistently follows through on commitments	4.39	Always
Stakeholders view leadership as trustworthy and accountable	4.46	Always
Decision-making processes are transparent to faculty and staff	4.15	Often
Leaders act in the best interest of the institution, even at personal cost	4.48	Always
The leadership is seen as credible by external stakeholders such as accrediting bodies and donors	4.34	Always
Overall Mean	4.36	Always

Table 3 indicate that FOHEI leaders consistently demonstrate credibility, fairness, and accountability. The highest-rated items include acting in the institution's best interest (4.48) and stakeholder trust (4.46).

Interview data support these findings:

"Fairness is important." (FOHEI 2)

These results align with Jun and Lee (2023), who emphasized that integrity-based leadership strengthens organizational trust. Furthermore, the findings support those of Vargas et al. (2023), who described a “trust cycle” in which transparency enhances commitment and institutional continuity.

Overcoming Communication Barriers

Table 4. *Leadership Practices – Overcoming Communication Barriers*

Overcoming Communication Barriers	Mean	Verbal Description
Leadership communicates major decisions clearly to all stakeholders	4.21	Always
There are structured mechanisms for two-way communication between management and staff	4.21	Always
Conflicts in communication styles among generations are actively managed	4.30	Always
Leaders encourage open dialogue across all levels of the institution	4.28	Always
Miscommunication within the leadership is minimized through established communication protocols	4.05	Often
Overall Mean	4.21	Always

Table 4 show that FOHEIs maintain strong communication systems, particularly in clarity of decisions and inclusive dialogue. Interview responses emphasize participatory leadership:

“I ask questions until I am satisfied.” (FOHEI 2)

“Many heads are better than one.” (FOHEI 5)

These findings are consistent with those of Umans, Lybaert, Steijvers, and Voordeckers (2020), who highlighted the importance of open communication in preserving institutional knowledge and reducing conflict. Similarly, Liu et al. (2025) emphasized that inclusive communication supports sustainability during leadership transitions.

Bridging Generational Gaps

Table 5. *Mean Distribution on the Extent of Leadership Practices in Terms of Bridging Generational Gaps*

Bridging Generational Gaps	Mean	Verbal Description
The institution promotes open discussions between senior leaders and younger potential successors	4.25	Always
Efforts are made to align the values and visions of different generations within the leadership team	4.28	Always
Leadership encourages knowledge sharing across age groups to support continuity	4.28	Always
Generational differences are acknowledged and addressed in leadership decisions	4.05	Often
Senior leaders mentor younger family members to prepare them for future roles	4.27	Always
Overall Mean	4.21	Always

Table 5 indicate that FOHEIs actively manage generational differences through mentoring and collaboration. Interview excerpts reveal early exposure and adaptive leadership:

“Expose your children early...” (FOHEI 2)

“Start early... adapt to trends...” (FOHEI 7)

These findings support Calabrò, Frank, Minichilli, and Suess-Reyes (2021), who noted that balancing founders’ vision with successors’ adaptability enhances sustainability. Likewise, Arrieta, Barrameda, and Sudarsana (2022) emphasized that early mentoring improves succession outcomes.

Differences in Leadership Practices

Table 7. *Test of Significant Difference in Leadership Practices of Family-Owned HEIs When Grouped According to Profile Variables*

Succession Strategies / Institutional Factors	Building Credibility and Trust				Overcoming Communication Barriers				Bridging Generational Gaps			
	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision
Ownership Exclusivity Type	51.4	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀	50.8	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀	44.3	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀
Years Founded	-2.44	0.018	Significant	Reject H ₀	-2.88	0.005	Significant	Reject H ₀	-2.55	0.014	Significant	Reject H ₀
	12.84	0.002	Significant	Reject H ₀	9.34	0.009	Significant	Reject H ₀	17.94	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀

All profile variables showed significant differences ($p < 0.05$). Ownership exclusivity exhibited the strongest effect. These findings align with Umans et al. (2020), Sánchez-Carrillo et al. (2021), Macasinag (2021), and Baltazar et al. (2023), which emphasize the influence of governance structure and institutional maturity on leadership practices.

Succession Strategies

Successor Mentoring

Table 8. Mean Distribution on the Extent of Implementation of Succession Strategies in Terms of Successor Mentoring

Successor Mentoring	Mean	Verbal Description
Current leaders give potential successors structured mentoring	4.10	Often
Successors are evaluated based on merit and leadership competence	4.22	Always
Leadership transitions involve coaching and development over time	4.22	Always
The institution provides learning opportunities tailored to future leaders	4.28	Always
Mentoring includes exposure to both administrative and academic functions	4.27	Always
Overall Mean	4.22	Always

Mentoring is highly practiced but often informal, as shown in Table 8.

"It was informal..." (FOHEI 1)

These findings align with Kurniawan (2024) and De Massis and Rondi (2020), who noted that family-based mentoring transfers both skills and values.

Stakeholder Involvement

Table 9. Mean Distribution on the Extent of Implementation of Succession Strategies in Terms of Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder Involvement	Mean	Verbal Description
Key stakeholders are consulted during leadership transition planning	4.07	Often
Faculty and staff feel they have a voice in succession-related decisions	3.71	Often
The leadership seeks feedback from non-family stakeholders during transitions	3.88	Often
External partners (e.g., alumni, board members) are engaged in leadership planning	3.68	Often
Succession processes reflect the broader interests of the institutional community	4.23	Often
Overall Mean	3.92	Often

Stakeholder involvement is moderate, indicating limited participation as shown in Table 9.

"No formal announcement..." (FOHEI 7)

This supports Daspit et al. (2018) and Hoque and Zheng (2024), who observed that succession decisions within family institutions are often managed internally.

Planning and Execution

Table 10. Mean Distribution on the Extent of Implementation of Succession Strategies in Terms of Planning and Execution

Planning and Execution	Mean	Verbal Description
There is a formal, written succession plan in place	3.90	Often
Leadership transitions are implemented according to a clear timeline	4.00	Often
Roles and responsibilities during transitions are well-defined	4.10	Often
Risk management is considered in succession planning	4.13	Often
The succession process is regularly reviewed and updated for relevance	4.14	Often
Overall Mean	4.05	Often

Planning is present but largely informal and reactive as shown in Table 10.

"It was unplanned..." (FOHEI 6)

These findings are consistent with Lagunda (2009), Upadhyaya and Kuknor (2025), Eisenhardt (1989), and Baltazar et al. (2023), emphasizing the need for formalized succession systems.

Differences in Succession Strategies

Table 12. *Test of Significant Difference in Succession Strategies of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions When Grouped According to Profile Variables*

Succession Strategies / Institutional Factors	Successor Mentoring				Stakeholder Involvement				Planning and Execution			
	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision
Ownership Exclusivity	1891	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀	1891	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀	1891	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀
Type	-3	0.005	Significant	Reject H ₀	-3.07	0.006	Significant	Reject H ₀	-3.42	0.002	Significant	Reject H ₀
Years Founded	13.85	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀	4.79	0.091	Significant	Reject H ₀	13.03	0.001	Significant	Reject H ₀

Succession strategies in family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) vary by ownership exclusivity and institutional type: fully family-owned schools rely on informal, trust-based mentoring, while shared-ownership institutions use formalized processes, as noted by Umans, Lybaert, Steijvers, and Voordeckers (2020) and Arrieta, Barrameda, and Sudarsana (2022). Institutional type also shapes practices due to regulatory and governance demands, consistent with stakeholder theory and professional standards in Philippine higher education. Older institutions develop more formalized systems over time, as observed by Lagunda (2009) and Macasinag (2021), but stakeholder involvement remains limited regardless of age. Overall, ownership, type, and maturity influence succession strategies, while broader stakeholder engagement needs improvement.

Sustainability Academic Excellence

Table 13. *Mean Distribution on the Extent of Sustainability of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions in Terms of Academic Excellence*

Academic Excellence	Mean	Verbal Description
The institution maintains high standards in the quality of teaching and learning	4.41	Always
Faculty members are provided with regular training and professional development	4.21	Always
The institution encourages research and publication among its academic staff	4.26	Always
Academic programs are regularly reviewed and updated to meet current needs	4.44	Always
The institution promotes a culture of academic integrity and excellence	4.46	Always
Overall Mean	4.35	Always

This information suggested that these schools are serious about their mission to provide accessible, high-quality education in their communities. One successor explained:

“To keep education accessible, compliant with the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and to have quality through master’s-qualified faculty.”
(FOHEI2)

This reflects the belief that quality and accessibility should go hand in hand, supporting Sánchez-Carrillo, Cadarso, and Tobarra (2021), who emphasized high academic standards as vital for the longevity of family-run colleges. Despite limited resources, these institutions maintain accreditation, faculty development, and curriculum review, consistent with Macasinag’s (2021) observation that formal quality assurance enhances resilience.

Stakeholder Trust

Table 14. *Mean Distribution on the Extent of Sustainability of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions in Terms of Stakeholder Trust*

Stakeholder Trust	Mean	Verbal Description
Stakeholders believe that institutional leaders act in the best interest of the school	4.34	Always
Faculty, staff, and other stakeholders have confidence in the decisions made by the school leaders	4.41	Always
The institution’s leadership regularly communicates with transparency, which strengthens trust	4.36	Always
Stakeholders feel that their concerns are acknowledged and addressed by leadership	4.39	Always
Trust in leadership has remained strong even during periods of institutional change or transition	4.43	Always
Overall Mean	4.39	Always

The findings show that stakeholder trust in family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) in Agusan is consistently very high, with an overall mean of 4.39 (“Always”). Indicators such as trust during institutional changes (4.43) and confidence in leadership decisions (4.41) suggest that stakeholders view leaders as transparent,

responsive, and acting in the school's best interest. This high level of trust reflects stable leadership and strong relational foundations, supporting long-term sustainability. It indicates that credibility, transparency, and responsiveness are deeply embedded, fostering cooperation and confidence during leadership transitions. These results align with Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), who emphasized trust as critical for organizational stability, and Sánchez-Carrillo, Cadarso, and Tobarra (2021), who highlighted the role of transparent governance and stakeholder confidence in sustainable higher education leadership.

Financial Stability

Table 15. Mean Distribution on the Extent of Sustainability of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions in Terms of Financial Stability

Financial Stability	Mean	Verbal Description
The institution maintains a clear and transparent financial management system	4.23	Always
Multiple sources of income support the institution's operations	4.17	Often
Financial planning includes long-term sustainability strategies	4.33	Always
The institution can meet its financial obligations on time	4.47	Always
Cost-effective measures are implemented without compromising quality	4.47	Always
Overall Mean	4.31	Always

The results in Table 15 show that family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur have developed a strong culture of fiscal efficiency and accountability. They consistently meet financial obligations, manage resources responsibly, and maintain transparency, reflecting leadership rooted in discipline and responsibility:

"Siya ay diktador, authoritarian, strict, kuripot sad kaayo sa kwarta, grabe kaayo mag-budget, pero practical siya."
(He is a dictator, authoritarian, strict, stingy, and very strict in the budget but very practical).
(FOHEI4)

These schools also emphasize transparency, compliance, and quality education to meet regulatory standards:

"Keep education accessible, compliant with DepEd, CHED, and TESDA, and have quality through master's-qualified faculty."
(FOHEI2)

"We want to grow enrollment to about 2,000 students, renovate facilities, and add new programs like BS Tourism. We will continue scholarships, improve recordkeeping, and empower younger leaders."
(FOHEI3)

Adaptability and Innovation

Table 16. Mean Distribution on the Extent of Sustainability of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions in Terms of Adaptability and Innovation

Adaptability and Innovation	Mean	Verbal Description
The institution quickly responds to changes in the education sector	4.39	Always
New technologies are integrated into teaching, learning, and administration	4.34	Always
The institution encourages innovation in academic and institutional practices	4.38	Always
Programs and services are continuously improved based on trends and feedback	4.28	Always
The institution invests in digital tools and resources for future-readiness	4.31	Always
Overall Mean	4.34	Always

Table 16 shows that family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur demonstrate strong adaptability and innovation, with an overall score of 4.34. These institutions actively modernize systems, programs, and management practices rather than merely reacting to external pressures.

"When Madam took over, she shifted to a managerial style, systematized, with focal persons, with accreditation and International Organization for Standardization (ISO)."
(FOHEI6)

"Train and expose the next generation. Encourage family members to continue the legacy. Seek accreditation."

Expand slowly and carefully. If needed, accept investors or partners. What matters is that the school will survive."
(FOHEI5)

Successors extend, rather than replace, the legacy of their predecessors, introducing modern systems while preserving core values, consistent with Baltazar et al. (2023)'s view that modernization is an evolution rooted in tradition. Despite limited resources, these institutions continuously innovate and maintain national standards, showing that sustainability relies not only on finances or technology but on moral commitment, adaptability, and strategic thinking. By combining family dedication with modern management, FOHEIs in Agusan exemplify how traditional schools can grow, adjust to new challenges, and remain resilient in a changing educational landscape.

Differences in Sustainability

Table 18. *Test of Significant Difference in Sustainability of Higher Education Institutions When Grouped According to Profile Variables*

Succession Strategies / Institutional Factors	Academic Excellence				Stakeholder Trust				Financial Stability				Adaptability and Innovation			
	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision
Ownership Exclusivity	1891	<.001	Sig	Reject H ₀	1891	<.001	Sig	Reject H ₀	1891	<.001	Sig	Reject H ₀	1891	<.001	Sig	Reject H ₀
Institution Type	2.83	0.006	Sig	Reject H ₀	1.94	0.057	Sig	Reject H ₀	2.34	0.023	Sig	Reject H ₀	2.1	0.04	Sig	Reject H ₀
Years Founded	27.7	<.001	Sig	Reject H ₀	12.7	0.002	Sig	Reject H ₀	13.4	0.001	Sig	Reject H ₀	12.9	0.002	Sig	Reject H ₀

Table 18 shows that the extent of sustainability in family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) in Agusan varies significantly by ownership exclusivity, institution type, and years founded, across the four indicators: Academic Excellence, Stakeholder Trust, Financial Stability, and Adaptability and Innovation. Sustainability differed significantly by ownership exclusivity ($p < 0.05$), with fully family-owned HEIs showing centralized decision-making that enables quick responses and strong alignment, as noted by Daspit et al. (2018):

"We make decisions quickly because we are family. We trust each other, and we already know the goals of the school."
(FOHEI7)

This demonstrated how the longevity of family-owned higher education institutions allows them to balance tradition with adaptability for long-term sustainability.

Relationship Between Leadership Practices and Succession Strategies

Table 19. *Significant Relationship Between Leadership Practices and Succession Strategies of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions*

Leadership Practices	Successor Mentoring				Stakeholder Involvement				Planning and Execution			
	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision
Building Credibility and Trust	-0.92	0.362	Significant	Reject H ₀	-1.9834	0.052	Significant	Reject H ₀	-1.766	0.083	Significant	Reject H ₀
Overcoming Communication Barriers	0.602	0.55	Significant	Reject H ₀	3.2996	0.002	Significant	Reject H ₀	2.3	0.025	Significant	Reject H ₀
Bridging Generational Gaps	5.88	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀	4.247	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀	4.158	<.001	Significant	Reject H ₀

Table 19 shows the relationship between leadership practices and succession strategies in family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur. Building credibility and trust has no significant relationship with any succession strategies, indicating that stakeholder confidence alone does not influence succession planning or execution. Overcoming communication barriers is significantly related to stakeholder involvement ($p = 0.002$) and planning and execution ($p = 0.025$), highlighting the role of effective communication in enabling participation and structured succession processes. Successor mentoring shows no significant relationship, likely due to the limited formal mentoring programs in these institutions (Hoque & Zheng, 2024). Bridging generational gaps demonstrates significant relationships with all succession strategies ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that intergenerational collaboration and mentoring are crucial for effective and sustainable leadership transitions (Calabrò, Frank, Minichilli, & Suess-Reyes, 2021).

Effect of Leadership Practices on Sustainability

Table 20. Significant Effect of Leadership Practices on the Sustainability of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions

Leadership Practices	Academic Excellence				Stakeholder Trust				Financial Stability				Adaptability and Innovation			
	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision
Building Credibility and Trust	0.522	0.604	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	0.812	0.42	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	-1.153	0.254	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	-0.0602	0.952	Not Significant	Accept H ₀
Overcoming Communication Barriers	1.832	0.072	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	1.809	0.076	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	4.292	< .001	Significant	Accept H ₀	2.6876	0.009	Significant	Reject H ₀
Bridging Generational Gaps	4.13	< .001	Significant	Reject H ₀	5.623	< .001	Significant	Reject H ₀	3.142	0.003	Significant	Reject H ₀	3.6555	< .001	Significant	Reject H ₀

Table 20 shows the relationship between leadership practices and the sustainability of family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur. Building credibility and trust had no significant effect on any sustainability indicators, suggesting that while stakeholders may have confidence in leaders, this alone does not directly improve institutional sustainability, consistent with Liao (2022):

"If there was resistance, we reminded everyone to compromise and not let personal problems affect the school."
(FOHEI1)

Baltazar et al. (2023) emphasize that blending tradition with innovation enhances long-term sustainability. While stakeholders perceive strong cooperation and trust in leadership, challenges like family dynamics and limited non-family involvement still exist:

"Typical family-business problems, in-laws, family dynamics. No formal constitution or manual. Limited non-family board members. The sudden change due to unforeseen events."
(FOHEI6)

Overall, these findings suggest that leadership practices centered on communication and generational collaboration are critical for sustaining FOHEIs, whereas credibility and trust alone, though valued, do not directly drive sustainability outcomes.

Effect of Succession Strategies on Sustainability

Table 21. Significant Effect of Succession Strategies on the Sustainability of Family-Owned Higher Education Institutions

Succession Strategies	Academic Excellence				Stakeholder Trust				Financial Stability				Adaptability and Innovation			
	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision	t-value	p-value	Conclusion	Decision
Successor Mentoring	0.885	0.38	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	2.44	0.018	Significant	Reject H ₀	3.31	0.002	Significant	Accept H ₀	1.606	0.114	Not Significant	Accept H ₀
Stakeholder Involvement	0.444	0.658	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	1.04	0.304	Not Significant	Accept H ₀	1.41	0.164	Not Significant	Reject H ₀	0.451	0.654	Not Significant	Accept H ₀
Planning and Execution	3.064	0.003	Significant	Reject H ₀	2.07	0.043	Significant	Reject H ₀	1.22	0.228	Not Significant	Reject H ₀	2.305	0.025	Significant	Reject H ₀

Table 21 indicates that succession strategies differentially affect the sustainability of family-owned higher education institutions (FOHEIs) in Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur. Successor mentoring significantly impacts stakeholder trust ($p=0.018$) and financial stability ($p=0.002$), showing that developing competent successors strengthens confidence in leadership and resource management (Arrieta et al., 2022). Mentoring does not significantly influence academic excellence or adaptability and innovation, reflecting limited modernization in older leadership approaches. Stakeholder involvement shows no significant effect on any sustainability indicator, highlighting the minimal role of non-family stakeholders in succession decisions. Planning and execution significantly affect academic excellence, stakeholder trust, and adaptability and innovation, but not financial stability, underscoring the importance of structured succession strategies for sustaining institutional performance. Overall, mentoring and systematic planning are critical for FOHEI sustainability, while stakeholder participation remains limited.

Conclusion

This study advances the literature on family-owned higher education institutions by presenting an integrated framework linking leadership practices, succession strategies, and institutional sustainability in Agusan

provinces. The findings show that sustainability is achieved not by tradition alone but through the alignment of credible leadership, intergenerational collaboration, structured succession planning, and adaptive governance. Strong stakeholder trust and mentoring reflect enduring family stewardship, yet formal succession policies, broader stakeholder participation, and professionalized governance remain necessary for long-term resilience. Practically, the results underscore the importance of written succession plans, leadership development, and inclusive governance aligned with CHED regulations, offering guidance to policymakers and regulators to support family-owned HEIs. The study also illustrates the value of integrating Agency, Stewardship, and Stakeholder Theories to understand family-run institutions, encouraging future longitudinal and comparative research, and highlighting that sustaining these HEIs requires balancing legacy with innovation while evolving leadership systems to meet modern educational demands.

Contributions of Authors

Both authors contributed equally to this study. Their responsibilities encompassed writing, editing, data analysis, and questionnaire preparation. Both authors played a key role in refining the study framework. Author 1 initially drafted the manuscript, while Author 2 focused on revisions and editing. Together, they collaboratively finalized and approved the manuscript for publication.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest, financial or non-financial, that could have influenced the conduct or outcomes of this research.

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